

WFWP UK: 6th Women, Faith and Family - Women as Peace Builders, Spirituality and Education Conference

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June 30, 2026



The program was moderated by Viola Dirnhofer. She introduced the 4 speakers briefly and invited them with warmth and enthusiasm to share their insights and experiences relating to the topic "Women as Peacemakers - Spirituality and Education."

Shenoy Mahmoudi is an immigration lawyer who is passionate about helping and creating opportunities for young adults from immigrant background. She sees them having potential to contribute to community and society, if they are given the opportunity, education and support. What Shenoy observes is that on coming to the UK they do not understand the education system, there are cultural and language barriers, communication problems etc. But she can see beyond that, she understands there also is an identity issue. So, Shenoy founded 'Roots and Wings', a mentoring program for young people. Helping them to integrate, navigate a new and not easily understandable education system. Trusted mentors are also inspiring hope, giving encouragement, helping to find their identity as they come to understand, they are not alone on this road. Women have a unique place in this work as educators, shaping identity, mentors and peacemakers, being bridgebuilders. Shenoy posed the question to the audience, how schools and community organizations can find ways to work more closely together to support.

Milly Azordegan-Lenihan is a young mother and has worked in education to safeguard inner city young adults. Her engagement and interest with education, inspired by the moral and spiritual aspects of her Bahai faith has led to the founding of the Big Creative Academy in East London, starting with 50 students, that became a recognized college with 500 students 10 years later. The central theme is that every child is noble and has creative capacity and unique talent. It needs the appropriate education to bring it out. She realises, that a child beside the family also needs the community around. Observing the

community around her children's school she was inspired to start her own weekly classes in her own home. Milly has now 15 children coming every week, having the opportunity to be creative, play together, sing together, pray together, form friendships; a community is developing with spirituality at its center. Milly says, that a better world starts with children, by not only educating their minds but also nurturing their hearts.

Betty Moloney- Rodrigues is a licensed Physiotherapist and marriage/family counsellor. As well as a Pilates instructor. Betty shared from her experiences and understanding, including being a mother. She realized that faith education starts at home, to create good habits with the children, she says that this cannot be outsourced through school education, she had to take responsibility for that herself. Her engagement as a Pilates instructor helped her to realise, how important alignment is with our inner values, beliefs and connection with the higher self is. Equally important is to find one's center - your heart to take the time to reflect every day, what is my priority. Finally, to find ones core, to resonate with the feminine part which in turn helps us to resonate with feminine part of God. She believes, then as women we can be true peacemakers.

Kirsty Leigh Moreton is a lawyer with practice in family law, criminal law and healthcare law. When a teenager she joined the faith community of Church of Jesus Christ the Latter-Day Saints. As a lawyer and being a member of the J. Reuben Law Society, she is looking how to bring spiritual values into practice in the community and foster peace in difficult and fragmented relationships. Kirsty advocates to begin with one's own family, and being exemplary in the community. It helps to facilitate tolerance and dialogue, developing trust. Spirituality and education can come together create a more peaceful environment to foster harmonious relationships.

Viola moderated the lively Q and A session that followed the speaker's presentation, several guests were interested to continue the dialogue afterwards. Some data was provided relating to speakers engagement in the community.